



Response to
Department for Infrastructure on Draft
Belfast Bicycle Network

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Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) are the regional umbrella body for the children's sector in Northern Ireland.

CiNI represents the interests of its 160 member organisations providing policy, information, training, and participation support services to members in their direct work with and for children and young people. CiNI membership also includes colleagues in the children's statutory sector recognising that the best outcomes for children and young people are increasingly achieved working in partnership with all those who are committed to improving the lives of children and young people in NI.

It is our view that cycling can bring so much benefit to children and young people, we are eager therefore to provide comment on the **Draft Belfast Bicycle Network**. We trust that our comments will be positively used to inform the next step in the process.

Comments

Do you agree that producing a Bicycle Network for Belfast is an important element of developing a more bicycle-friendly city? What time-frame do you think it should cover?

We do agree that a Bicycle Network for Belfast is important to foster behaviour changes towards healthier ways of travelling. It is our view that it would help tackle childhood obesity, increase well-being in children and introduce fun ways for all the family to exercise together.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), World Health Organisation and the British Medical Association advise us to find ways of building physical activity into our everyday life, we believe the Bicycle Network for Belfast would do just that.

While we understand, the timescale is based on the infrastructure projects that will be needed to complete this project, we would however recommend aiming to complete the project in as quick a time as possible considering obesity is such a major problem.

Do you agree that these five criteria from the BMTP are still valid for the development of a network for Belfast? If not, what do you consider the criteria should be? Please explain.

We believe the criteria of Coherence, Directness, Attractiveness, Safety, and Comfort are still valid. However, we believe one of the biggest barriers that parents face in relation to allowing their children to cycle is that they do not see the streets and roads as safe and as such children and young people are deterred because of their parents' views on safety issues and the level and speed of traffic on our roads.

We would ask that the issue of safety is given the highest priority and whether it is actual safety issues or perceived safety issues, these must be addressed if parents are to be encouraged to allow their children to cycle.

Question 3: Do you agree that the development of a Belfast Bicycle Network is a key element in giving those who would like to cycle (but currently don't) the freedom and confidence to do so?

We do however, consideration should be given to further 20mph zones and lower speeds overall particularly around the Belfast Cycle Network areas which we believe would lead to more children and young people cycling and ultimately a better quality of life.

We also believe working in partnership to design, plan and deliver services will also be key to delivering this strategy. There are many public bodies which have an impact on the lives of children and young people so it makes perfect sense that working in collaboration as outlined in the Children's Services Co-operation Act will ensure the wellbeing of children and young people will be delivered upon through the building of the cycle network.

Question 4: Do you agree that the objectives in 3.9 should be applied to the network? If not, what objectives do you think should be set?

Yes, we believe the objectives are relevant and should be applied. Again, we would reiterate the need for active travel to be promoted in an education environment for children and young people and not just in relation to a physical activity. The importance of active travel should be accessible and could potentially be life-enhancing for many people.

Question 5: Do you agree that the primary network should be based on the concept of arterial and orbital routes?

Yes. Again, we recommend safety is given the highest priority. Looking at the Netherlands, traffic safety is part of the school curriculum. We recommend the Department work with schools to ensure that children are given the skills to be able to get around safely on bicycles and that car owners are also taught to respect cyclists. We would also welcome the involvement of local councils to map a network of safe routes for cycling in all council areas which would have the potential to enhance cycling around the country.

Question 6: Do you agree that the network should be developed in Primary and Secondary stages as outlined in 3.13? If not, how should it be developed?

We believe this would be a sensible approach.

Question 7: Do you agree that we should consider requirements of likely users on a scheme by scheme basis, for example routes which will primarily be used by children on the school journey may be best served as shared track?

We are delighted the Department has given specific consideration for children and young people and their parents. There are numerous benefits to getting children and young people cycling more, all of which contribute to improved well-being including tackling obesity, improved mental health and leading to a better community spirit.

In order to realise these benefits, we totally agree that segregation cycle lanes for children and young people are necessary. Safety is of paramount concern to parents and permeates through all decisions when thinking about their child cycling. We also believe that safety is a barrier blocking people of all ages from taking up cycling. We are pleased the department is addressing this key barrier.

Question 8: Are there any other kinds of bicycle infrastructure that should be considered? What are they? Do you have any views on which types of infrastructure, if any, should be favoured in developing a network for Belfast?

We believe this bicycle infrastructure is right for Belfast.

Question 9: Do you support the use of the network requirements as detailed at paragraph 5.1?

Yes.

Question 10: Do you agree with the addition of 'Adaptability' as a network requirement? What other requirements would you like to see included?

Yes.

Question 11: Do you agree that the routes should be planned and facilities designed with the achievement of increasing numbers of people cycling in mind?

Yes.

Question 12: What are your views on segregation between people who walk, people who cycle and people who drive? What are your views about physical segregation between motorised traffic and non-motorised traffic? Do you agree that there are levels of traffic (footway or carriageway) below which physical segregation is not always necessary – such as quiet routes and residential areas?

We believe cycling routes should be segregated wherever possible irrespective of the level of traffic to ensure the safest route for children and young people.

While we have no fixed view on segregation between people who walk and people who cycle we would advocate that consideration should be given to adequate width if segregation is used. However, segregation may not be necessary if courtesy signs are erected asking cyclists to give way to pedestrians or share with care.

Each situation must be considered on a case by case basis, and careful consideration must be given to what may work. We don't feel that one size fits all, the Department should be flexible in this approach.

Question 13: How important is the requirement that 'routes need to flow'? What kind of signage should be provided? What facilities should be provided?

It is our view that routes do need to flow to allow as direct a route as possible and that the design and traffic laws should make it unambiguous as to who has the right of way. Good flow would certainly encourage cycle use.